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THE ROUND TABLE

BETTER SPEECH WEEK AT MONTEVALLO

We teachers of English had labored industriously for correctness in writing and speaking. We had accomplished something on the side of writing by persuading the faculty to consider themselves teachers of composition as well as ourselves. We found the problem of speech habits almost baffling. In spite of regular explanation and drill in class, in spite of frequent round-table discussions among older classmen, speech defects would prevail. In order to enlist the wills of the students, to supplement the class instruction, we established last spring Better Speech Week. We purposely had it follow Better Babies Week, Health Week, Fashion Week, upon all of which we modeled our plan.

First, we requested each of our fifteen sections in English to choose a representative whom they considered best in spoken English. Needless to say, these students considered themselves highly complimented and they began immediately to improve their speech habits. With these representatives as a council, we fashioned and conducted our Week. We planned several posters to appear successively upon a bulletin board placed for this purpose. The first poster was an announcement of the Week and its plan. Another had at the top, in colors, the "Dutch Cleanser" woman, with dictionary in hand and this underneath the picture: "Webster's Unabridged chases *ain't*." Another, called "Swat the fly," represented a hand with a fly-swat about to strike several flies named "I am so enthused," "Has the bell rang?" "I have got a book," etc. Still another poster had the word "cute" in the center with arrowheads leading from it to pictures of various things to which "cute" is applied—clothes, a boy, a cabin, an automobile, etc. Another bit of preparation was the collection from all the students during the week preceding of observations of current mistakes in English, selecting the most common and posting the list on the bulletin board.

Throughout the Week the classes represented dramatically on the campus during recreation hour some of the expressions on the list mentioned above. Each class was represented twice; for instance, the Seniors appear Monday and Thursday; the Sophomores, Monday and Friday. At the end of each performance, an opportunity of guessing was

given. Some of the mistakes were represented thus: "I was well raised"—a girl lifted on a see-saw arrangement; "She carried me to the moving picture show"—a small girl in a large girl's arms; "She sat on me." At the end of the Week, a chapel hour was devoted to the subject, with only students in charge. At the close of the discussion, the class which had been most clever was given honorable mention, and the student who had guessed the most mistakes was given a dictionary for a prize.

Now what were the results? For the first time our students as a body considered this matter seriously. For the first time, also, we touched that most difficult, delicate problem—the faculty's English. Afterward several teachers and officers questioned me about certain expressions and invited me to examine their notices on the bulletin boards.

We hope to accomplish more next year. We shall begin earlier, organize the English department loosely into a Speech Council, composed of active and associate members, the former being those who promise to use every opportunity to improve their ability to speak, the latter being those who promise to be careful as to their speech. We shall retain the council of representatives to conduct early in the year Better Speech Week and to formulate other such devices for keeping this subject before the students. We hope to send out to the parents, who represent all parts of the state, circular letters, perhaps from this council, which will insure among them a thoroughly sympathetic attitude toward speech improvement and any activity which we may devise on the order of Better Speech Week.

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THE TASK OF THE ENGLISH TEACHER

Discussions as to the teaching of English generally center about the problem, "How can we make this subject interesting to our pupils?" Interest is indeed, today, the keynote for all educational theories. But I believe that teachers who discuss the problem with this idea in mind miss the real difficulty which one who guides younger minds has to meet. That problem is, "How can we make our subject truthful to the present?"

The reading of the literary masterpieces commonly studied in the four years of the high school, endeavors to teach literary art, as well as the intellectual and moral contents of the particular work studied. These classics, however, reveal the intellectual and moral concepts of the age